United Nations E/2002/53

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
30 April 2002

Original: English

Substantive session of 2002
New York, 1-24 July 2002
Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda*
Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits: integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

Progress report on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The quality of the dialogue on indicators has generally improved. The Economic and Social Council has successfully put the issue of indicators and measurement of progress in the agenda. This has heightened the awareness of the need for quality information for policy decision-making. More stakeholders — users as well as producers of information — have been involved in a broader dialogue at all levels, inside member States, at international agency level as well as at the intergovernmental level. However, there still remains a problem with the formulation of new indicators derived from current policy debates. National statistical experts need to be involved earlier in the process in order to take account of the countries' capacities to produce proposed new indicators.

* E/2002/100.

** The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

02-36154 (E) 230502

The technical quality assessment of over 280 indicators conducted by national statistical experts has led in the advance towards a structured priority set. Furthermore, the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and its follow-up process have focused the debate on how to measure development progress. Thus, while there is now slowly a consensus emerging regarding a limited list of key developmental indicators, there is still a need for further harmonization and rationalization owing to the existence of multiple indicator lists, with incomplete overlap. The Statistical Commission is recommending a process to address this problem.

The efforts to build statistical capacity in member States need to be continued and intensified. The ability of member States to regularly produce relevant and reliable data is crucial for the success of all major development initiatives.

A coordination problem with respect to global data collection and data production in the United Nations system (and beyond) remains. The statistical services of member States are still too often overburdened by the sheer volume of data requests received from international organizations. There is often a lack of effective coordination among international agencies with respect to questionnaire design, estimation and aggregation techniques. The Statistical Commission is currently working on the identification of the most serious problems. However, the role of the Commission, beyond flagging the problems, is limited, as it has no direct control over data-collection and -production activities in specialized agencies and regional development bodies.

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
	Introduction	1–4	3
I.	Need for statistical capacity-building and cooperation of donors	5–11	4
II.	Approval and review of indicators used in the United Nations system	12–13	5
III.	Review of common country assessment indicator frameworks	14–16	6
IV.	Statistical Commission focal point role and identification of a limited set of indicators	17–24	6
V.	Indicators on means of implementation	25–28	8
VI.	Role of the United Nations Statistics Division as focal point	29–32	9
Annex			
	Recommendations of the Friends of the Chair ad hoc expert group on indicators		11

Introduction

1. Mindful of the importance of basic indicators and statistics both for the formulation of effective development policies and for monitoring progress towards priority goals, the Economic and Social Council had discussed extensively at its 1999 and 2000 substantive sessions the issue of basic indicators and statistics in the context of integrated and coordinated follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels. At a special meeting of the Council in May 1999 dedicated exclusively to basic indicators, the Council discussed an analytical report on indicators (E/1999/11), which had been prepared by the United Nations Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in close cooperation with statistical experts as well as policy experts from both the national and the international level. The discussions of the Council led to the adoption of resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27.[1] In paragraph 12 of its resolution 2000/27, the Council requested the Secretary-General to prepare a progress report on the implementation of section II of resolution 1999/55 and resolution 2000/27, for consideration by the Council at its substantive session of 2002. The present report takes up the major themes contained in the resolutions and describes progress achieved in the various areas.

2. The United Nations Statistics Division has taken the lead in implementing Economic and Social Council resolutions on basic indicators. It has reallocated some of its resources to form a section in the Office of the Director whose primary responsibility it is to work on the implementation of the resolutions and on related issues, such as improved inter-agency cooperation and technical cooperation in statistics. Reflecting a full awareness of the need to incorporate technical knowledge available only in the specialized agencies of the United Nations system and a mindfulness of the Council's concern regarding the full participation of all member States, the efforts to implement the resolutions were always conducted in the spirit of encouraging broad and frequent consultations. The United Nations Statistics Division made an outreach effort to the national statistical offices, sending global mailings to all national statistical offices, to keep them informed and involved in the process. The formation of a "Friends of the Chair" expert group on indicators by the Statistical Commission at its thirty-second session in 2001 (see sect. IV below) ensured the full participation of national statistical experts. Through the appropriate channels, such as the (now defunct) Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Subcommittee on Statistical Activities and expert group meetings, the Statistics Division kept close contact with the relevant agencies and entities of the United Nations system.

3. The detailed results of the implementation efforts are described below, using the structure of Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/27 as organizing principle. Progress in the area of "Need for statistical capacity-building and coordination of donors" (paras. 3 and 4 of resolution 2000/27) is described in section I. In section II, the issue of "Approval and review of indicators used in the United Nations system" (paras. 5 and 6 of resolution 2000/27) is treated. In section III, the results of the "Review of the common country assessment indicator frameworks" (para. 7 of resolution 2000/27) are presented. Section IV then takes up the issue of the "Statistical Commission focal point role and identification of a limited set of indicators" (paras. 8 and 9 of resolution 2000/27). Section V presents some work undertaken on "Indicators on means on implementation" (para. 10 of resolution 2000/27). The final section (VI) provides examples of how the United Nations Statistics Division is actively playing its "role as a focal point" (para. 11 of resolution 2000/27).

4. The main conclusions of this report can be summarized as follows:

- The quality of the dialogue on indicators has generally improved. The Economic and Social Council has successfully put the issue of indicators and measurement of progress in the agenda. This has heightened the awareness of the need for quality information for policy decision-making. More stakeholders — users as well as producers of information — have been involved in a broader dialogue at all levels, inside Member States, at international agency level as well as at the intergovernmental level. However, there still remains a problem with respect to the formulation of new indicators derived from current policy debates. National statistical experts need to be involved earlier in the process in order to take account of the countries' capacities to produce proposed new indicators;

- The technical quality assessment of over 280 indicators conducted by national statistical experts has led in the advance towards a structured priority set. Furthermore, the adoption of the United Nations Millennium Declaration[2] and its follow-up process have focused the debate on how to measure development progress. Thus, while there is now slowly a consensus emerging regarding a limited list of key developmental indicators, there is still a need for further harmonization and rationalization owing to the existence of multiple indicator lists, with incomplete overlap. The Statistical Commission is recommending a process to address this problem;
- The efforts to build statistical capacity in member States need to be continued and intensified. The ability of member States to regularly produce relevant and reliable data is crucial for the success of all major development initiatives;
- A coordination problem with respect to global data collection and data production in the United Nations system (and beyond) remains. The statistical services of member States are still too often overburdened by the sheer volume of data requests received from international organizations. There is often a lack of effective coordination among international agencies with respect to questionnaire design, estimation and aggregation techniques. The Statistical Commission is currently working on the identification of the most serious problems. However, the role of the Commission, beyond flagging the problems, is limited, as it has no direct control over data-collection and -production activities in specialized agencies and regional development bodies.

I. Need for statistical capacity-building and cooperation of donors

5. At its thirty-third session in 2002, the Statistical Commission included in its agenda the item of statistical capacity-building.[3] It discussed the elements of national statistical capacity and the necessary conditions for building such capacity at the national level. It furthermore reflected on what role technical cooperation by the international community could play in order to support national efforts for capacity-building. The report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity-building (E/CN.3/2002/18) which was before the Commission distinguished between the following elements of national statistical capacity: institutional context, physical or capital resources, human resources, knowledge resources and management resources (see para. 6 thereof). The report suggested that the area where technical cooperation could be expected to be both most needed and most effective was in the transfer of technical expertise to strengthen the knowledge resources component of statistical capacity.

6. **The Statistical Commission stressed that statistical capacity-building efforts and related technical cooperation activities need to be embedded within the national framework of development policies. It emphasized the need to build the demand for statistics in order to secure sufficient national resources to build and sustain statistical capacity.** The Commission agreed that to accomplish this objective a broad spectrum of the user community, including policy decision makers, mass media, research institutions, universities and the public at large, needs to be engaged. The Commission also stressed the importance of South-South cooperation and high-profile peer reviews.

7. The United Nations Secretariat in close cooperation with the funding and specialized agencies of the United Nations system has continued to support countries in the efforts to build national statistical capacity. In particular, for the United Nations Statistics Division, technical cooperation is a crucial part of its regular work programme. The Statistics Division provides direct technical assistance at the country and regional levels through its advisory services and its series of training workshops. In this context, the Development Account has proved to be a valuable source of funding for programmes at the regional level, which facilitate exchange among member States of practical experiences and good practices. The Statistics Division currently supports three large regional programmes in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) regions.

8. As an integral part of its normative and analytical function, the United Nations Statistics Division also produces extensive technical material in the form of

handbooks (for example, on national accounting, on census recommendations, etc.). Moreover, the recent publication of the "Handbook of Statistical Organization", 3rd ed., "The operation and organization of a statistical agency" (ST/ESA/STAT/SER.F/88) has gone beyond the strictly statistical and technical subject matter and has addressed institutional as well as managerial issues. **The Statistical Commission endorsed the technical cooperation programme of the United Nations Statistics Division and particularly welcomed its efforts to strengthen statistical organization, leadership and management.**

9. In an effort to mobilize resources towards capacity-building in statistics and to encourage the coordination of statistical capacity-building programmes, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations Secretariat and a number of bilateral donors launched the initiative PARIS 21 (Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century). PARIS 21 defines itself as a unique partnership of national, regional and international statisticians, policy makers, development professionals and other users of statistics, including civil society. It has been established as a global forum and network to promote, influence and facilitate statistical capacity-building activities and the better use of statistics. Its work is guided by an annual Consortium meeting and a Steering Committee of representatives of developing and transition countries, donors and international organizations. The Consortium is co-chaired by a member of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission and the Chair of the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC).[5]

10. The goals of PARIS 21 are to contribute to more effective poverty reduction and improved transparency, accountability and effectiveness of governance in developing and transition countries in order, inter alia, to help achieve the goals of various United Nations summits and major conferences. It works through advocacy, information exchange and partnership, in support of:

- Increased political support, funding and demand for statistical information systems;
- Integration of statistical capacity-building into national development strategies and as a foundation for effective evidence-based policy-making, management and monitoring;
- Comprehensive strategies to strengthen and sustain capacity to produce, analyse and use statistics and other information;
- More effective user-producer dialogue and improved collaboration between all partners undertaking and assisting statistical activities, in particular through recognizing the mutual roles and needs of policy makers and national statistical offices;
- Application of PARIS 21 partnership principles[6] and United Nations guidelines for technical cooperation for statistics.

The Statistical Commission agreed that the PARIS 21 initiative provided a useful framework in which many of the issues raised above can be addressed.

11. PARIS 21 aims to help to develop adequately resourced, well-managed and sustainable statistical systems and their use. A short-term aim of PARIS 21 is to encourage statistical capacity-building programmes in heavily indebted poor countries (HIPCs) and other countries developing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), which effectively encompass all countries eligible for concessional funding.

II. Approval and review of indicators used in the United Nations system

12. The Friends of the Chair expert group on indicators, which was mentioned above in the introduction to this report and which will be described in more detail in section IV below, considered the issue of review and approval of indicators especially in the context of new indicators. According to the national experts, the work to establish new indicators should begin as part of the preparation of any forthcoming major conference or summit and should involve both policy officials and statisticians from both international organizations and member States. Any new indicator requirement should be seen within the wider context of the totality of indicator needs. As such, emerging needs must be set alongside existing needs. The experts stressed that the development of new indicators should be reconciled with national policy needs for statistics and should take account of the statistical capacity of countries to produce them. National statisticians should

be involved. Since they are closer to the raw data, they have a unique perspective on the technical properties of indicators, the availability of any proposed indicator and the data-collection and resource implications.

13. In order to translate these general principles into concrete mechanisms, the Friends of the Chair expert group **recommended that advanced planning for United Nations summits and major conferences should trigger a broad consultation process, including both policy officials and statisticians within the international agencies, in particular the United Nations Statistics Division. The Statistics Division should ensure that national statisticians are consulted during the development process, with due consideration given to regional balance. Proposals for new indicators should be made to the Statistical Commission, which would report to the Economic and Social Council.**

III. Review of common country assessment indicator frameworks

14. In response to the request of the Economic and Social Council to review the common country assessment (CCA) indicator frameworks, an inter-agency working group of indicator specialists, with the support of the United Nations Statistics Division, undertook a detailed analysis of the use of indicators in the common country assessment of 36 countries.[7] The results were presented in a paper[8] to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund (UNDP/UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with the participation of the World Food Programme (WFP), on 26 January 2001. This paper was made available to the Economic and Social Council as a background document at its substantive session of 2001.

15. The analysis revealed that the process of selecting country-specific indicators varied considerably from one country to another. The availability of data was frequently a factor in determining which indicators were chosen. Most of the 36 countries responding to the field inquiry reported having initiated a consultation process with the Government — generally with the national statistical offices or other line ministries — in the selection and compilation of indicators used in the CCA. The paper also cites linkages of the CCA process in general and of the indicator compilation in particular with national planning and international development tools such as the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers. It also shows that the CCA indicator frameworks served as an important tool to identify statistical weaknesses in the systems of member States, a realization that is the basis for future programmatic support of the statistical sector by the United Nations system: 18 country teams reported that, because they had found national capacity for compiling comprehensive CCA indicator frameworks to be severely constrained, programmes or projects to strengthen national statistical capacity were put in place or concrete plans existed to do so within the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF).

16. **The paper concludes that additional donor resources and technical assistance are required to strengthen institutional and human resource capacities of national statistical systems.** In this context, the United Nations Statistics Division will develop technical materials to support country teams in their efforts to put valid and relevant statistical databases together. Finally, the paper also stresses that, in the light of practical experiences and new development priorities, the indicator frameworks will have to be modified over time. In fact, after the completion of over 100 country CCAs, the United Nations Development Group has recently undertaken a first review of the CCA indicator framework as contained in the CCA guidelines, in order to harmonize the CCA indicators with the proposed indicator framework as contained in the road map[9] for the monitoring of the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration.

IV. Statistical Commission focal point role and identification of a limited set of indicators

17. The Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission,[10] as its authoritative technical body, to:

- Provide leadership in the field of conference indicators;
- Conduct an in-depth technical analysis of conference indicators;

- Make recommendations regarding a limited list of conference indicators;
- Develop and recommend to the Council a mechanism of statistical review for future proposed indicators.

18. As a result, at its thirty-second session (2001) the Statistical Commission established an expert group of Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission to consider the issues further. The members of this expert group included national statistical experts from Australia, Botswana, China, Italy, Jordan, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mexico, Palestine and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The group effort was led by Professor Tim Holt of the United Kingdom.

19. The technical assessment was carried out on more than 280 statistical indicators derived from United Nations summits and major conferences held over the past 10 years. Seven sub-expert groups were established to cover the common division of policy areas (economics/poverty, demography, health, environment/energy, employment/labour, education, other social) that is reflected in ministerial responsibility in most countries. Experts from 34 member States contributed to the work of these thematic subgroups. Members of various international agencies also made valuable inputs to the process. The indicators were assessed on technical criteria and the relevance to the policy goals. A web site has been created on the United Nations Statistics Division's Internet site that contains all of the indicators and their technical assessments (http://www.esa.un.org/unsd/indicatorfoc/).

20. **The Friends of the Chair expert group prepared an extensive analytical report with detailed recommendations.** The expert group was particularly concerned to propose mechanisms to ensure a greater participation of Member States in the development and adoption of statistical indicators for global and national purposes. The report was presented to the Statistical Commission at its thirty-third session (E/CN.3/2002/26). **The Statistical Commission endorsed the findings of the Friends of the Chair expert group and recommended that its report be transmitted to the Economic and Social Council. The detailed report is available to the Council as a background document. Furthermore, the 31 recommendations contained therein are included in the present report as an annex.**

21. In response to the request for a limited list of conference indicators, the Friends of the Chair expert group elaborated an indicator framework containing three priority tiers. Each tier contains about 40 statistical indicators. In addition, a further category contains indicators that would be useful for a more detailed understanding of any policy area. The framework is arranged to reflect the major policy areas referred to above. However, important additional policy areas cut across this arrangement and typically cut across government department policy responsibilities in many countries. Such policy areas include poverty, gender and child welfare. Indicators covering those issues are contained within the framework. Also, there are areas in which the indicators need improvement (for example, indicators on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) or indeed simply do not exist and need to be developed (for example, indicators for human rights and good governance). Those tasks were considered to be too extensive to undertake in the time available. However, the Friends of the Chair expert group made recommendations to the Statistical Commission to establish processes to accomplish those tasks (see the recommendations in the annex).

22. The Friends of the Chair expert group recognized that the proposed framework must be kept under review to allow, for instance, further development in response to emerging needs with respect to future summits and major conferences. The existing arrangements for indicator development are unsatisfactory. **The group proposes that the responsibility for maintaining the indicator framework and for extending it to take account of new requirements should rest with the Statistical Commission, which would recommend to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of new indicators and their position within the hierarchic framework. Furthermore the Friends of the Chair expert group recommends that the Commission should establish a standing committee to take responsibility for the indicator issues and to act on behalf of the Commission between meetings to ensure that no undue delay occurs.**

23. At the same time as the Friends of the Chair expert group was conducting its technical evaluation and developing its proposed indicator hierarchy, the follow-up process to the United Nations Millennium

Declaration led to the formulation of the road map, which contained a proposal for a Millennium Declaration indicator set (see also para. 30). The United Nations Statistics Division kept the Friends of the Chair expert group abreast of these developments and drew the particular attention of the expert group to the millennium development goals indicator set, so that it could be included in the technical review of the experts. Upon review, the expert group did include most, but not all, of the suggested millennium development goals indicators in its priority tiers 1-3. For the six indicators not included in the priority tiers 1-3, the expert group had reservations with respect to the conceptual clarity of the indicators or with respect to their insufficient present methodological development, which often explains the serious lack of data for many countries. **The Statistical Commission at its session in 2002 voiced the concern that "the development of the millennium development goals indicator set was a parallel process with insufficient country involvement that had not been coordinated with the current efforts of the Commission to follow up on Economic and Social Council resolutions concerning indicators". In this context, the Commission "expressed the opinion that further harmonization and rationalization of indicators was needed".**[11]

24. Finally, the Friends of the Chair expert group identified as a major issue the level of statistical capacity needed for countries to support the information needs of national and global policies. Developing statistical capacity goes beyond providing financial and technical support from international donors that is narrowly focused on specific statistical production to monitor a specific global policy. As a consequence, **the Friends of the Chair expert group called upon the Economic and Social Council and international donors to recognize the need to support and develop core statistical capacity within member States, including statistical infrastructure, and recommended that all donor activity for statistics should recognize the need to address both national and international statistical requirements. As part of this recognition, the expert group recommends, furthermore, that the Council and the international organizations and donors should promote the use of statistics to support effective national policy development and good public administration**. The Statistical Commission concurred with these recommendations.

V. Indicators on means of implementation

25. In an effort to further develop indicators on means of implementation, the United Nations Statistics Division commissioned a desk study by a statistical and developmental expert.[12] Based on an analysis of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and of the documentation related to the International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey, 18-22 March 2002), the commissioned report identifies 17 broad categories of means of implementation (such as official development assistance (ODA) macroresources, external debt relief, international trade, approval and ratification of treaties, ODA by purpose, foreign direct investment (FDI) etc.). For some of these categories, well-defined indicators have been developed and are being compiled (for example, "net ODA as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income", "net present value of debt to exports" etc.). The report lists those indicators with their respective data sources. The report furthermore critically reviews indicators of means of implementation contained in the road map for the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration, namely, those associated to goal 8 entitled "Develop a global partnership for development".

26. For practical reasons, indicators on means of implementation can be categorized as those associated to commitments of developed countries, those associated to commitments of developing countries, or those associated to commitments of both developed and developing countries. For instance, developed countries have made commitments for mobilizing resources for poverty alleviation, debt relief (for heavily indebted poor countries) and capacity-building. Developing countries' commitments refer to the implementation of programmes to alleviate poverty and to introduce policies and reforms that guarantee good governance. The report observes that the availability of indicators to monitor the commitments of developed countries is somewhat more satisfactory than that of indicators referring to commitments of developing countries in this respect. This is so because the global commitments of developed countries are often more macroeconomic in nature, while those of developing countries are rather programmatic and budgetary. Macroeconomic statistics are conceptually and operationally well developed, while the indicators, for example, for public resource allocation are weak in

developing countries, specially in the least developed ones.

27. A second general conclusion is that, at the level of specific goals and targets, the degree of development of indicators is very uneven. There are areas (such as ODA macroresources, external debt relief, international trade) where important experience is available, and strong institutions exist at the national, regional and international levels. For the areas where this is not the case (ODA for public goods, national or international good governance), the report attempts to assess the nature and magnitude of the efforts still needed.

28. The present high demand for indicators of means of implementation by the policy decision makers poses two types of challenges. **The first challenge is identifying a short list of indicators that can be widely used by the United Nations political bodies and the media. The second challenge is creating the capacity for estimating these indicators at a satisfactory quality level.**

VI. Role of the United Nations Statistics Division as focal point

29. At the last two sessions of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, the United Nations Statistics Division extensively briefed the colleagues from the partner organizations on the Economic and Social Council resolutions on basic indicators and the follow-up activities.[13] Furthermore, in its role as the secretariat of the ACC Subcommittee on Statistical Activities, the Statistics Division actively promoted the use of the Subcommittee for coordination issues. The agenda of the last session of the Subcommittee in 2001 had included issues such as "Proposed common questionnaire for organizations to collect data on expenditure by visitors in countries" (item 6), "Good practices in citation in the outputs of international statistical offices" (item 7) and "Coordination of data sets that may be disseminated by different organizations covering the same subject matter (item 10)" (see ACC/2001/2, annex I). The reform of the ACC machinery which created the new United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and effectively disbanded the ACC subcommittees, including the one on statistical activities, poses a new challenge to the international statistical community. The Statistics Division is currently exploring with its statistical partners the possibility of creating a new coordination mechanism, which would allow it to continue the necessary process of close cooperation in the exchange of data and metadata, without necessarily organizing regular annual meetings.

30. One concrete area in which the United Nations Statistics Division has assumed a leadership role is the preparation of the global annual reports for the General Assembly to monitor progress towards the development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The Statistics Division will provide the statistical basis for these progress reports, pulling thereby together global statistical sources and analyses from the United Nations systems. Building on the indicator framework of 48 indicators contained in the road map, which was the result of a consultative process led by the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, the Statistics Division is at present reviewing, together with its partners, the data that are being compiled on a regular basis by the responsible international organizations to determine their suitability for this monitoring process. In this context, the Statistics Division has called two expert group meetings (in March and April 2002) to assess periodicity, consistency and reliability of the available series. The first of these expert meetings, in which national statistical experts also participated, further refined the indicator framework in the areas of environment and global partnership (goals 7 and 8).

31. All available data are being included in the United Nations Statistics Division's web site (http://www.millenniumindicators.un.org), where they are fully accessible to national and international statistical services, Governments and the public. In compiling these data, complete documentation is also being collected by the Statistics Division. All the source offices will be asked to comment and make available information on periodicity of series relative to the monitoring and reporting timetable, methodological documentation, available data evaluation studies and the like. Partner agencies are asked to make sure that data are based on a reliable and documented national source.

32. Despite the encouraging examples of inter-agency cooperation, the goal of effective coordination among the statistical units of the United Nations system and beyond remains a continuous and long-term one. Member States are still concerned about being

overburdened with data questionnaires received from the international organizations and about inconsistencies in the publication of data (sometimes between agencies or between national and international publications). **There is at present no effective coordinating mechanism that looks at the issuance of questionnaires or at estimation and aggregation methods.** Encouraged by the Statistical Commission, the United Nations Statistics Division had asked member States to keep the Statistics Division informed about specific examples of duplicative data collections. The Statistics Division is currently working on a report on this issue for the next session of the Commission in 2003. However, there are limits to what the Commission, being a technical body that meets only once a year, can accomplish. In fact, the Commission does not have any control over the data-collection activities of specialized agencies or, for example, regional development bodies. **The Commission can and will continue to flag the problems, using its technical authority to influence concerned parties with respect to cooperating or to converging in their practices.**

Notes

[1] In this context, also refer to the progress report of the Secretary-General (E/2000/60) on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels.

[2] See General Assembly resolution 55/2.

[3] For detailed information on statistical capacity-building, see the report of the Secretary-General on statistical capacity-building (E/CN.3/2002/18) and the annual report of the Steering Committee of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century (PARIS 21) (E/CN.3/2002/19)

[4] For more background information on technical cooperation in statistics see "Some guiding principles for good practices in technical cooperation for statistics" (E/CN.3/1999/19, annex), which were discussed and endorsed by the Statistical Commission in 1999.

[5] For further information, refer to http://www.paris21.org.

[6] These principles recognize that the people and Governments of developing and transition countries make the most important contribution to development. They emphasize the need for country ownership and leadership, shared long-term international and local commitment and better-coordinated technical cooperation.

[7] List of the 36 countries: *Africa*: Burundi, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, the Gambia, Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, South Africa, Swaziland; *Asia and the Pacific*: Bangladesh, China, India, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Viet Nam; *Latin America and the Caribbean*: Barbados, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Panama, Trinidad and Tobago; *Arab States*: Algeria; *Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States*: Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia.

[8] Document DP/2001/CRP.4-DP/FPA/CRP.1-E/ICEF/2001/CRP.3-WFP/EB.1/2001/INF, entitled "Progress with the use of common country assessment indicator frameworks", dated 17 January 2001, presented to the joint meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF, with the participation of WFP, on 26 January 2001.

[9] See report of the Secretary-General entitled "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" (A/56/326).

[10] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2000/27 of 28 July 2000 on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (paras. 8 and 9).

[11] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 2002, Supplement No. 4* (E/2002/24), para. 66 (d).

[12] The full report entitled "Indicators on means of implementation", March 2002, is available from the United Nations Statistics Division upon request.

[13] See reports SA/2000/9 presented at the thirty-fourth session of the ACC Subcommittee, held from 20 to 22 September 2000 in Washington, D.C., and SA/2001/12 presented at the thirty-fifth session of the Subcommittee, held from 18 to 20 September 2001 in Vienna.

Annex

Recommendations of the Friends of the Chair ad hoc expert group on indicators

The following text corresponds to section VI of document E/CN.3/2002/26 entitled "Report of the Friends of the Chair of the Statistical Commission on an assessment of the statistical indicators derived from United Nations summit meetings: note by the Secretary-General" and contains the consolidated recommendations found therein. The paragraph numbers following the recommendations refer to document E/CN.3/2002/26.

The Friends of the Chair ad hoc expert group recommends that:

Development of indicators and maintenance of the indicator framework

1. The indicator framework should be updated in response to future United Nations summits and major international conferences, developments of the indicator framework within international agencies and advances in technical standards. (para. 94)

2. Advanced planning for United Nations summits or major conferences, or the significant review of indicators within any international agency, should trigger the consultation process recommended. (para. 99)

3. The need for baseline measures should be taken into account when targets are adopted that require change to be measured from a specific point in time. (para. 43)

4. The identification of statistical indicators for monitoring purposes should involve both policy officials and statisticians; each of these groups should draw upon international agencies and member States; and:

- The identification and development of new indicators should be coordinated by the appropriate lead policy area;
- It should take account of the capacity of countries to produce them;
- The officials concerned should have a clear responsibility to involve other agencies and parts of the United Nations organization that have a legitimate interest at the earliest stage;
- The liaison should involve both policy officials and statisticians within the international agencies; in particular, the United Nations Statistics Division should be involved from the outset;
- A number of representatives (statisticians and policy officials) of member States should be invited to join any development team as full participating members and that, additionally, wider (electronic) consultation should be undertaken;
- Within member States the statisticians consulted should be those responsible for the relevant area, but the United Nations Statistics Division should ensure that national statistical agencies are involved in coordination areas;
- The United Nations Statistics Division should use the regional statistical commissions and direct electronic communication with national statistics offices to ensure that national statisticians are consulted during the development process;
- National statisticians, in turn, should use their regular contacts with their user communities (and particularly national policy officials) to provide feedback on the reconciliation of national and international requirements and the United Nations Statistics Division should provide feedback to the development process through those mechanisms;
- In due course, the lead policy area, in consultation with the United Nations Statistics Division, should make proposals to the Statistical Commission, which would report to the Economic and Social Council. (para. 100)

5. The responsibility for maintaining the indicator framework and for extending it to take account of new requirements should rest with the Statistical Commission, which would recommend to the Economic and Social Council the adoption of new

indicators and their position within the hierarchical framework. (para. 101)

6. The Statistical Commission should establish a standing committee to take responsibility for indicator issues and to act on behalf of the Commission between meetings to ensure that no undue delay occurs. (para. 102)

7. The United Nations Statistics Division, in close consultation with the lead policy officials and as a result of the consultation process recommended, should prepare recommendations for the Statistical Commission (or its standing committee, as appropriate). (para. 103)

8. In developing indicators and placing them within the framework, the criteria listed in paragraphs 52-55 of E/CN.3/2002/26 should be applied. (para. 104)

9. The Statistical Commission should establish a process involving official statisticians and others, including officials of the World Health Organization, to review the hierarchical framework and priorities in the health domain with the intention of addressing the substantive gaps in the indicator set, determining if there are infrastructure investments that can address a range of data gaps and creating linkages between the short list of priority indicators and the large number of other indicators in the domain. (para. 79)

10. The Statistical Commission should establish a process involving educational statistics experts from international agencies and member States to investigate the feasibility of adapting skill assessment methods employed in the developed world for use in developing nations. (para. 85)

11. The Statistical Commission should establish a mechanism (perhaps a city group involving statisticians and others, including policy officials) to develop statistical indicators of human rights and good governance. (para. 65)

12. The indicators adopted in the major sets should be amended to be consistent with the use of gross domestic product (GDP)/gross national income (GNI) in the framework. (para. 81)

13. The Minimum National Social Data Set (MNSDS) should be withdrawn. (para. 92)

Production of indicators

14. The United Nations Statistics Division should submit a report to the Statistical Commission on the availability of indicators in tiers 1 and 2 (and tier 3 where information is available) of the proposed framework. The report should include an assessment of what might be needed to overcome the shortfall. (para. 60)

15. In general, indicators should be measured every 3-5 years, but some should be measured annually, while others (particularly those that are census-based) should be updated every 10 years. (para. 75)

16. If the data source supports an analysis by sex, then such an analysis should be provided for all indicators. (para. 73)

17. The need for coherent statistics used in the numerator and denominator of indicators should be recognized, and international agencies should work to identify inconsistencies and act as a catalyst in helping countries to resolve them. (para. 67)

18. Member States should supply adequate metadata to support users' needs, in particular where national norms differ from international measures or underpinning assumptions may materially affect the indicator value. (para. 71)

19. Metadata should make the basis of poverty indicators clear, and for national poverty lines, it should contain an explanation of the methodology employed. (para. 82)

20. International agencies should strive to improve the coordination of data collection from countries. (para. 39)

Technical and quality issues

21. The United Nations Statistics Division web site should be the definitive source of technical information on the indicators. (para. 49)

22. The United Nations Statistics Division should promote the development of standards and guidance on best practices for indicators, where needed. (para. 39)

23. All statistical indicators should be subject to periodic review and improvement, and when such a review results in change, an approach should be provided to support countries in moving to the

improved indicator while maintaining continuity with the recent past. (para. 45)

24. Periodic reviews of individual statistical indicators within the proposed framework should be included within the appropriate work programmes of statistical review and revision that are regularly reported to the Statistical Commission. (para. 105)

Statistical capacity

25. The Economic and Social Council and international donors should recognize the need to support and develop core statistical capacity within member States, including the statistical infrastructure, and all donor activity for statistics should recognize the need to address both national and international statistical requirements. (para. 39)

26. As part of that recognition, the Economic and Social Council and international organizations and donors should promote the use of statistics to support effective national policy development and good public administration. (para. 39)

27. Donor-supported programmes should genuinely add to the statistical capacity within the country rather than divert it. (para. 39)

28. When considering statistical capacity, international donors and countries themselves should take particular account of the importance of a core set of demographic statistics and GDP estimates as an integral component of many statistical indicators. (para. 67)

29. The initiative to develop an indicator of national statistical capacity through the PARIS 21 initiative should span social and economic statistics and should be modified to involve member States, and final proposals should be made to the Statistical Commission. (paras. 29 and 39)

30. All efforts should be made to fulfil the Statistical Commission decisions made in 2001 in respect of purchasing power parity measurement. (para. 83)

Miscellaneous

31. The Friends of the Chair expert group should be discharged. (para. 106)